

PEOPLE. POWER.

What is Community Energy?

Community Energy is what happens when people come together and build their own solutions to the problems of our energy system. Motivated by climate change or a desire to tackle pollution or fuel poverty, communities install their own renewable energy systems, supplying clean power and bringing the benefits back to their neighbourhoods.

Working together achieves far more than we can as individual households: not everyone has a good roof for solar panels and few have space for a wind turbine! When people get together they can decide for themselves what the best solution in their area might be. These projects are hugely popular and can put communities at the heart of the renewables revolution.

Westmill Sustainable Energy Trust,
Oxfordshire, a pioneering UK
community energy group ►



Power is shifting

Our power grid was built to distribute electricity from huge coal-fired power stations. But we are now moving out of the fossil fuel age, with coal providing less than 8% of our electricity - now far less than renewable sources. Landowners are installing turbines and millions have installed solar panels. We are no longer just passive consumers - 'Prosumer' households, co-operatives and businesses are changing the system.

Some flavours of Community Energy

Solar PV



- in the UK, the most common form of Community Energy project involves solar photovoltaic (PV) panels generating electricity from sunlight, typically on community buildings.

Solar stars: Brighton Community Energy, Westmill Solar Co-op, Edinburgh Community Solar Co-op

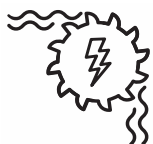
Wind



- PV may be the most popular, but in a windy country like the UK this is what does the heavy lifting. Onshore wind gives the most clean energy per pound of any power source, if you've got a good (& supportive!) spot.

Top breeze riders: Westmill Wind Farm Co-op, Baywind Energy Co-op, Findhorn Eco-village

Hydro



- if you've got access to a good river for it, it's one of the most steady and reliable forms of renewable energy. It doesn't come cheap but it's energy from rain!

In full spate: Whalley Community Hydro, Halton Lune Hydro, Howsham Mill Renewable Heritage Trust

Energy Efficiency



- the "fifth fuel". Whether bulk-buying LEDs or fitting insulation, many community energy groups are tackling fuel poverty and helping to reduce energy usage.

Wrapped up warm: BHESCo (Brighton & Hove), MOZES (Nottingham)

Storage



- this is the new kid on the block. As prices fall it becomes cost-effective to help people use renewables or load up on cheap energy when supply outstrips demand.

Charged up: MOZES (Nottingham), REPOWERBalcombe

Bringing it all back home

Community energy projects are normally member-controlled and democratic, and set up to provide funding to the local community from money made selling energy. Groups surveyed in 2016 brought an average of £12,000 into their community over the year. This money is often used to help tackle fuel poverty or deliver local environmental improvements like community woodlands or play equipment, or simply to support other community groups.

Energy cafes offer advice & support to people in fuel poverty (Image by South East London Community Energy) ►



Community Energy is worldwide!

In Germany, some towns are buying back their local electricity grids.

Community energy co-operatives own more than 70% of the wind turbines in Denmark.

11 cities and 2 counties in California created Sonoma Clean Power to support renewables and lower energy costs.



The Barefoot College in India has trained over 2,000 women from the developing world to install solar panels in their communities.

Villages in Nepal run their own small-scale hydroelectric plants, powered by meltwater from Himalayan glaciers.

Find scores more groups across the country at communityenergyengland.org/current-members

Rebuilding our relationship with energy

Faced with the threat of climate breakdown, we need to radically change our approach to energy. We have to reduce the amount we consume and ultimately cut out fossil fuels entirely. Community energy is the ideal way to start bringing these abstract challenges into every neighbourhood, providing cheaper energy but using the income to make our communities more resilient.

The renewable revolution is impressive but it is not proceeding fast enough to meet the challenge of climate change and our commitments under the Paris Agreement. Community Energy offers us all a way to play a part in the great transition to sustainable energy, and to inspire

and engage people of all ages and backgrounds.



◀ Pupils from Gylemuir Primary School at the launch of the share offer for Edinburgh Solar Co-operative

To find out more about Community Energy and how you can support it, check out these organisations:



communityenergyengland.org
communityenergyni.org



communityenergywales.org.uk
communityenergyscotland.org.uk



cse.org.uk

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